

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Naming of USS Harvey Barnum DDG 124
Thursday, July 28, 2016

Good morning. I want to welcome all of you here, particularly Barney Barnum's family, his wife Martha, daughter Lisa, brother Henry, nephew Todd, and a lot of other family members, including some grandchildren of Barney's. And we've got a whole lot of distinguished guests.

Every one of you are here to honor the person and what he has done for the United States. But I want to recognize just a few of them: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Joe Dunford, who – former Commandant of the Marine Corps. Jay Paxton, the current Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Al Gray, 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Jim Conway, whom I had the privilege to serve, 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Tom Morgan, former ACMC. Honorable Craig Duehring, former Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Honorable William A. Chatfield, former Director of the Selective Service. And Sergeant Major Harold Overstreet, the 12th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. Barney, for someone who started out as a lieutenant, that's a pretty good lineup to be here today. (Laughter.)

So thank you all. Thank you all for joining us here at this historic post to honor an American hero. And in doing so, we honor a generation of heroes, represented here today by Colonel Barney Barnum and fellow Medal of Honor recipients here today, Brian Thacker and Drew Dix, platoon mate in Vietnam Patrick O'Connor and many other veterans of Vietnam and the Vietnam era.

Fifty years ago – 50 years ago a young man from Cheshire, Connecticut was embroiled in a battle in the jungles of Southeast Asia, fighting for his life and the lives of his Marines. While on a temporary assignment to Vietnam, Lieutenant Barney Barnum found himself outnumbered by a North Vietnamese attack, which was launched in a well-planned, coordinated dawn attack on his very small, isolated hilltop fire post. His company commander was mortally wounded, the radio operator killed. And Barney, without regard for his safety, assumed command, moved into heavy fire, rallied his Marines, and led a successful counterattack on key enemy positions. During this, while the battle raged, he coordinated the evacuation of the wounded and those who had died, before seizing the battalion's objective.

For these actions, Lieutenant Barney Barnum was awarded the Medal of Honor. In other words, an O2 on TAD had, in a few hours, done more and shown more courage and selflessness than most of us do in a lifetime. Lieutenant Barnum would have been very justified in just coming home, returning to a quiet and a private life. But he chose a different path. He continued

his service as a United States Marine. Captain Barnum reported to headquarters Marine Corps as the aide-de-camp to the assistant commandant. And then he went back to Vietnam in 1968, as CO of Battery E, Second Battalion, 12th Marines.

During this tour, he was awarded a Bronze Star, Combat “V”, and a Gold Star in lieu of a second Bronze Star award, a Navy Achievement Medal with a Combat “V”, a Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, and the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Silver Star. When he came back, he was assigned, among other places, The Basic School, the Amphibious Warfare School. He was also Second Battalion, 10th Marines military secretary to the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps. Colonel Barnum retired from the Corps in 1989, after more than 27 years of distinguished service in uniform.

Now, once again, he would have been very justified and very understandable if he had just gone home, lead a quiet and a private life. And once again, he chose a different path, one of continued public service. He served as principal director, drug enforcement policy, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Reserve Affairs – a position he held for eight years – and Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. During this busy life, he’s also found time to be president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, currently sits on the advisory boards of the Pentagon Federal Credit Union and Segs4Vets, a nonprofit administered by volunteers who provide Segways to disabled U.S. military personnel. He’s a director on the board of the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation, and the Americans in Wartime Museum.

Colonel Barnum’s career exemplifies the versatility, the resilience, the dedicated service – that all of these qualities are alive and well in today’s Navy and today’s Marine Corps. Qualities live through people like Barney Barnum, that have made, continue to make, and keep our Marine Corps and our Navy the greatest expeditionary fighting force the world has ever known.

Very uniquely, our Navy and Marine Corps team provide presence around the globe, around the clock. They ensure stability. They deter adversaries. And they provide our nation’s leaders with options when the crisis comes. We’re America’s away team because Sailors and Marines, equally in times of peace and war, are not just in the right place at the right time, but the right place all the time. There are no permanent homecomings for Marines and Sailors. There is no next best thing to being there. And so in every case, from high-end combat, to irregular warfare, to disaster relief, our naval assets, our Sailors and Marines get on station faster, we stay longer, we bring everything we need with us, and because we can act without having to ask anyone else’s permission because our ships are sovereign U.S. territory, we can get the job done.

Maintaining that presence requires gray hulls on the horizon, which is why we’ve reversed the decline in shipbuilding, and we are guaranteeing that our fleet will be at 300 ships by 2019, and to our assessed needs of 308 ships by 2021. One of those ships that will join that fleet is the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, the DDG. Destroyers, sort of like the person we’re honoring here today, incredibly versatile. They can do a lot of things at once – execute undersea warfare, surface warfare, air warfare, missile defense. In other words, like Marines, like Colonel

Barnum, our DDGs are capable of fighting our country's battles in the air, on the land, and on the sea.

One of the most important things I do as Secretary, one of the highest privileges that I have, and one that I take the most seriously is to name all these ships. A former CNO once said we have both a tradition and a future. And we look with pride and confidence in both directions. A ship's name maintains that continuity and perpetuates a legacy of her namesake. The ships we are build today will sail the seas for decades. And sailing aboard them will be Sailors and Marines not yet born. It's important that they know their heritage, and understand how past sacrifices enable future generations of Americans to enjoy freedom. And it's important that Americans know and remember these acts of heroism and of putting others before self. And it's important that those around the world who will see this ship, come in contact with this ship, know the story of the person this ship represents and the values that person represents for all of us.

So in recognition of an American hero, whose actions that day a half-century ago, but whose entire life defines service and sacrifice, and in commemoration of an entire generation of Vietnam veterans, and as an inspiration to all those who follow in their footsteps, it's my honor to officially name DDG 124 USS Harvey C. Barnum, Jr.